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1. The reorganization of the Czechoslovak Army, which is being fashioned after the Soviet pattern, was and still is accompanied by extensive purges in the military and has resulted in a critical shortage of politically reliable cadres of regular army officers. In order to build up the number of officer personnel as quickly as possible, the CSR regime has established special short-term officer replacement courses for youth throughout the country. The graduates of these courses or schools, which are known as SDD (Skola Dustojsnickeho Dorostu - Officers' School for Youth) are eligible for further military training in the regular officers' school.

2. SDD accepts youths between 17 and 20 years of age; the most important prerequisite for candidacy is political reliability. A candidate must be "socialistically minded", preferably the son of a Communist Party member, or he must prove his origin from the working class and the socialistic leanings of his parents. An applicant whose parents were formerly well-to-do and religiously inclined would be a rare exception to be considered as a prospective candidate.

Attended one of the meetings of the SCM (Czechoslovak Youth Association) at the Zilina QM School, I heard the statement that 20% of the candidates accepted for the SDD throughout the CSR are members of the Communist Party. Most of the candidates were those who were given a chance to become party members prior to May 1948 when membership was wide open to youths, even those only 15 years of age. About 70% of the candidates were members of the SCM (Svaz Ceskoslovenske

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Mladeze - Czechoslovak Youth Association) which is a communist organization. Other candidates were compelled to become members of SCM during their course of study at SDD. Previous education required of an SDD candidate varies greatly, and depends on his political reliability, class origin, and abilities. In general, the candidates are graduates of schools equivalent to the US junior high school. About 10% of the candidates are graduates of elementary schools plus some trade school education.

3. The length of the SDD course is equivalent to one year of military service and is credited as such. The school year begins on 1 September and ends between 20 and 25 August of the following year, with a short vacation period sometime during the year.
4. During the SDD course there are two examinations. The mid-year exam takes place in late February and the final exam on or about 20 August. These examinations are more or less of a perfunctory nature since the students are graded daily (even on the merit of a very brief question and answer) so that the instructor is in a position to evaluate each student constantly without benefit of an examination.
5. Prior to August 1951 the graduates of SDD were merely considered to be candidates for one of the military schools, but, as of August 1951, the graduates were appointed NCOs to give them an incentive to further pursue their military careers. As NCOs the SDD graduates are assigned to different military schools according to their particular abilities, grades, and physical fitness. The Air Force schools, for which candidates must be of unquestionable political reliability, in excellent health, and have high grades, are given top priority among the military schools. About five to seven per cent of those graduates who had a previous secondary education and who completed SDD in excellent standing are usually assigned to universities and technological universities for further study.
6. Usually two to three per cent of the students prove to be below the expected level in mental ability, and are failed either at the mid-term or final examinations. A student who is found to be ineligible for further study after either examination, is obliged to join the Army and serve an additional period of time in order to complete the required term of two years of service. If such a student is of draft age, he is required to join an assigned unit without delay. If he is less than 20 years of age, he is given the alternatives of voluntarily serving the rest of his two year term of service, or being dismissed and wait until his class is called into service, and then have that period of time he spent at the school credited toward part of his two year term of service. In case the student has elected to be discharged and await his call to service, providing that he is honorably discharged from SDD and his political reliability is sound, he returns to his civilian occupation and his future remains unimperilled. If the student is discharged for political unreliability however, the dismissal may gravely affect his civilian status. That is, if his political misdemeanor is found to be of light degree, the political section of the school would invariably decide that the candidate could not be a fully reliable officer and he would be discharged; in spite of the blemish on his political reliability record, the student is allowed

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to choose and pursue one's will in occupation without being molested by the state security organization. If, on the other hand, the candidate was dismissed because he committed a more serious offense against the security regulations of the state, such as severely criticizing the ideology of the Communist Party or its present policy, or if he had concealed some pertinent offence which he had committed prior to his entry into SDD, he has a harder lot. He would be dishonorably discharged, his cadre file would be forwarded to his birthplace and the local branch of the Communist Party would decide his fate. He is subjected to trial and usually deprived of the right to choose his civilian occupation. He must thereafter accept any type of work assigned to him by the labor department; this may be in a stone quarry, foundry, or coal mine, where he is given the most unpleasant, difficult, and dangerous tasks at hand. In addition, this perpetrator of "ideological deviation" is required to serve sufficient time in the army to complete the prescribed two-year tour of duty. Such cases occurred rarely because the candidates for SDD were thoroughly screened and checked prior to admission to the schools.

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